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RNR130

MIDEAST - CARRIER :

WASHINGTON, OCT. 12, REUTER - THE U.S. AIRCRAFT CARRIER FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT HAS LEFT BARCELONA, SPAIN, APPARENTLY SAILING EASTWARD IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, U.S. DEFENSE OFFICIALS SAID TODAY.

THE WARSHIP COULD BE REINFORCING THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER INDEPENDENCE AND FOUR DESTROYERS REPORTED OVER THE WEEKEND TO BE IN THE CRETE AREA.

DEFENSE OFFICIALS SAID THEN THE VESSELS WERE STANDING BY IN CASE THE 90,000 AMERICANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST HAD TO BE EVACUATED. THEY CAUTIONED AGAINST SPECULATING ON ANY FURTHER ACTIVITY BY THE SHIPS.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN JERRY FRIEDHEIM CONFIRMED THE FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT HAD LEFT BARCELONA BUT HE REFUSED TO SAY IN WHICH DIRECTION THE VESSEL WAS HEADING AND SAID IT WAS ENGAGED IN "NORMAL AT-SEA OPERATIONS."

FRIEDHEIM SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO INDICATION OF MAJOR RUSSIAN SHIPPING MOVEMENTS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, BUT HE WOULD NOT DISCUSS OPERATIONS BY THE 50 TO 55 SOVIET VESSELS NORMALLY IN THE AREA.

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